



# M.E.A.L Paragraphs

A How To Guide.

# M.E.A.L. Paragraphs

- Strong Paragraphs
- Can Stand Alone ...
- OR
- Can be found within a larger work like an Essay



# Why M.E.A.L.?

- This is the same basic structure you will use throughout your high school career, and well into your collegiate career.
- Once you master the basic MEAL Paragraph structure, you will have the skills to write beautiful paragraphs, which in turn will allow you to write beautiful essays!
- Every 9<sup>th</sup> grade English class @ SJC learns this structure as a means to help benefit all students in their many classes.

# What are MEAL Paragraphs?

- The idea is that every paragraph is a meal. (Like food)
- A well prepared “meal” is filling and likewise, a well prepared MEAL paragraph should be substantial or “filling”.
- MEAL paragraphs, if used in an essay, would be:  
Body Paragraphs. They would not be the introductory or closing paragraphs.



# M is for... MAIN IDEA

- MAIN IDEA or Topic Sentence
- The topic sentence is what the entire paragraph will be about.
- This serves as the most important sentence in the paragraph because it tells your reader exactly what the subject of the paragraph will be.
- This is especially important in an essay, because these paragraphs will support the most important sentence of an essay: the thesis statement or main argument.

Before we move on...

## A Lesson on Supporting Sentences

- The Role of Supporting Sentences is to further explain and “support” the topic.
- There are AT LEAST five to eight sentences in each paragraph.
- Supporting Sentences are also used to:
  - Maintain a reader’s interest
  - Give direct evidence from a book
  - Give examples from the real world (real life)

That Being Said.. Moving on to the rest of the MEAL....



# E is for... EVIDENCE

- Evidence or Proof found in a **story** or through **research**.
- This would be an opportunity to use quotes or point out examples from the text you are reading to support your claim.
- So you claim Rainsford is brave? Prove it!
  - He entered the jungle alone...
  - Entered the scary chalet/mansion...
  - Agrees to compete against General Zaroff...

# A is for... ANALYSIS

- Analyze or Explain How the Evidence you provided Proves the Main Idea.
- Giving an example of Rainsford's bravery isn't enough...
- Explain HOW those examples prove he is brave.
- Analysis is the **trickiest** part of the MEAL paragraph.
- It's difficult because you need to explain very carefully how each piece of evidence you provided makes sense as support in this context.



# L is for... LINK

- Link the paragraph back to its original topic sentence in the case of a MEAL paragraph.
- OR in a larger context...
- Link refers to how the paragraph fits in with what the paper is trying to prove. Link the main paragraph back to the thesis/main argument.

# All Together Now!

- M – Main Idea: Topic Sentence
- E – Evidence: Proof Found in Story/Research
- A – Analysis: How The Evidence Proves the Main Idea
- L – Link : How a Paragraph Fits in to what the paper is trying to prove.



FOR INSTANCE:

If I was assigned to write paragraph about the best holiday we celebrate in America, my “M” for Main Idea or TOPIC SENTENCE could start like...

- Thanksgiving is the most enjoyable American holiday because it's all about family bonding and relaxation.

# Let's See MEAL in Action...

## For Example:

If I was assigned to write a paragraph about the best holiday we celebrate in America, my “M” for Main Idea or TOPIC SENTENCE could start like...

- Thanksgiving is the most enjoyable American holiday because it's all about family bonding and relaxation.
- Now I need to provide Evidence...



## MAIN IDEA:

Thanksgiving is the most enjoyable American holiday because it is all about family bonding and relaxation.

## EVIDENCE:

- American Thanksgiving traditions include a delicious meal, typically consisting of turkey, stuffing, potatoes of assorted varieties, and pumpkin pie and other treats. There are many football games on to watch and relax.
- Most people have Thanksgiving off for work and certainly school, so families are given a chance to be together.
- Thanksgiving traditions include watching TV, shopping, and other leisure activities

# Prove The Evidence

**EVIDENCE:** Delicious Meal with assorted goodies, time off of work/school to visit with family, leisure activities: watching games, playing games, shopping, etc.

## **ANALYSIS:**

Most families are able to get together since **school and most jobs are on break** allowing family from out of town to come visit, making for a much more exciting and enjoyable holiday. When together, the family can enjoy each other's company before eating the **big traditional meal**. This meal can be a lot of work, so the more help the better! Helping out in the kitchen can be very fun while also providing a bonding opportunity between participants and the head chef. It is in these moments that one can learn how to cook, or how to make family recipes. In addition to cooking, there are many **football games on TV** allowing the family to come together for or against a particular team, while also relaxing with one another. If your family or certain members of your family tire of football, there are many movies on TV as well as the Macy's Parade. This time together can also provide an excellent chance to **play a game** outdoors or indoors. When it is time for the meal the family finally is able to relax together.



# Now to Link It Back...

Note how the link is not just restating the topic sentence, but I connect it in a new and more interesting way.

## M (Main Idea)

Thanksgiving is the most enjoyable American holiday because it is all about family bonding and relaxation.

## L (Link it Back)

Since Thanksgiving is not a holiday where presents are required, the family can come together to benefit from one another's presence making it the most enjoyable American holiday.

# The Breakdown...

## M: (MAIN IDEA)

Thanksgiving is the most enjoyable American holiday because it is all about family bonding and relaxation.

## E (EVIDENCE) AND A (ANALYSIS)

Most families are able to get together since school and most jobs are on break allowing family from out of town to come visit, making for a much more exciting and enjoyable holiday. When together, the family can enjoy each other's company before eating the big traditional meal. This meal can be a lot of work, so the more help the better! Helping out in the kitchen can be very fun while also providing a bonding opportunity between participants and the head chef. It is in these moments that one can learn how to cook, or how to make family recipes. In addition to cooking, there are many football games on TV allowing the family to come together for or against a particular team, while also relaxing with one another. If your family or certain members of your family tire of football, there are many movies on TV as well as the Macy's Parade. This time together can also provide an excellent chance to play a game outdoors or indoors. When it is time for the meal the family finally is able to relax as a whole.

## L (LINK)

Since Thanksgiving is not a holiday where presents are required, the family can come together to benefit from one another's presence making it the most enjoyable American holiday.



# All Together Now!

Thanksgiving is the most enjoyable American holiday because it is all about family bonding and relaxation. Most families are able to get together since school and most jobs are on break allowing family from out of town to come visit, making for a much more exciting and enjoyable holiday. When together, the family can enjoy each other's company before eating the big traditional meal. This meal can be a lot of work, so the more help the better! Helping out in the kitchen can be very fun while also providing a bonding opportunity between participants and the head chef. It is in these moments that one can learn how to cook, or how to make family recipes. In addition to cooking, there are many football games on TV allowing the family to come together for or against a particular team, while also relaxing with one another. If your family or certain members of your family tire of football, there are many movies on TV as well as the Macy's Parade. This time together can also provide an excellent chance to play a game outdoors or indoors. When it is time for the meal the family finally is able to relax as a whole. Since Thanksgiving is not a holiday where presents are required, the family can come together to benefit from one another's presence making it the most enjoyable American holiday.

# Need Another Example of a MEAL Paragraph?

The rules of St. John's College High School are very fair, with the exception of the rule requiring students to not chew gum on property. The handbook states, "students found in violation of this rule may receive an administrative detention (pg 24)". An administrative detention is too severe for something as insignificant as chewing gum. Teachers should simply remind students to not chew gum rather than force them to have detention when they have more important things to do. If this rule were to be amended, St. John's would become a more positive learning environment for teachers and students alike.



Now Let's Practice!

# Let's Write One Together

- First we need a topic sentence.
- Our idea:
- The summer is an enjoyable season because it allows for various outdoor activities.
- NOW Need EVIDENCE.